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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [MARR](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: UKRAINE: RADA CONVENES, COALITION FORMATION GETS
PUNTED AGAIN

REF: A. KIEV 2190
[1](#)B. KIEV 2170

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Nearly 11 weeks after national parliamentary and local elections, Ukraine remains without a Rada majority coalition.

A June 7 Rada session opened and closed quickly, with 227 Orange MPs voting to adjourn until June 14. Deputies from the Party of Regions and the Communist Party stayed on the Rada floor to hold a "meeting" featuring a parade of speakers criticizing the Yushchenko administration, the USG, and the U.S.-Ukraine Sea Breeze military exercise in Crimea (Ref A). Regions MP Leonid Kozhara stressed to us that Regions did not oppose joint military exercises per se, just the way the Yushchenko government had mishandled the issue. Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT) MP Hryhoriy Nemyrya told Charge that Orange forces punted on coalition formation because they needed more time to reach agreement, a view seconded by Presidential chief of staff Oleh Rybachuk, who asserted that a deal could be announced as early as June 8. Rybachuk added that when a deal was reached, an extraordinary Rada session would be called to seek legislative approval for Sea Breeze. An aide to Roman Bezsmertny, Our Ukraine's point man in the coalition talks, told us that Socialist Party leader Oleksandr Moroz late on June 6 had issued President Yushchenko an ultimatum, demanding to be made Rada Speaker in return for joining the Orange Team. A senior BYuT MP, Andriy Shevchenko, separately told us that Moroz "smelled blood in the water" and would not easily back down from the ultimatum; Moroz was also being wooed by Regions with promises of becoming Speaker, an assertion that Bezsmertny earlier denied had any basis (Ref B). Shevchenko predicted that Bezsmertny would emerge as the compromise Orange choice to become Speaker; Our Ukraine insider Petro Poroshenko did not have the votes to become Rada chief. Shevchenko added that Regions' inflammatory handling of the situation in Crimea had enraged President Yushchenko and squashed prospects for a so-called Orange-Blue coalition. End summary.

Undignified Scene at the Rada

[1](#)2. (U) A much-anticipated Rada session quickly opened and closed on June 7. Instead of making an announcement about the formation of governing coalition, Our Ukraine (OU) MP Mykola Katerynychuk, who chaired the session, called for a vote to adjourn the Rada until June 14. MPs from the Communist Party and the Party of Regions, many screaming in protest, rushed the rostrum to prevent Katerynychuk from announcing the tally and officially closing the session. A total of 227 pro-government MPs quickly cast "yes" votes and Katerynychuk, with hundreds of camera flashes going off and while being jostled by several beefy Communist and Regions

MPs, gaveled the session to a close.

Rump Meeting

¶3. (SBU) With all but a handful of Team Orange MPs off the Rada floor, Communist MP Adam Martynyuk and Regions MP Raisa Bohatyrova convened what Martynyuk called an informal "meeting" of the remaining MPs. A parade of Communist and Regions MPs, led by Communist Party leader Petro Symonenko, took turns at the rostrum denouncing the Yushchenko administration of allowing the "illegal" Sea Breeze military exercise (Ref A) to proceed in Crimea, accusing the USG of "trying to turn Ukraine into another Yugoslavia," and calling on MPs from the Orange side to defect and attempt to form an "intra-parliamentary majority" with Regions and the Communists. (Note: Such a majority would be illegal, as only entire factions can form a parliamentary majority). Party of Regions MP and financier Rinat Akhmetov was on the Rada floor during the "meeting," frequently conferring with Regions' leader Viktor Yanukovich.

¶4. (SBU) Regions MP Leonid Kozhara stressed to us that Regions did not object to cooperation with NATO and joint military exercises per se, but asserted that the Yushchenko government had in this case failed to get the necessary parliamentary approval for the drill. (Note: Regions and the Communists are collecting MP signatures to hold an extraordinary Rada session to discuss the situation in Crimea.)

Why Team Orange Punted: The Smiley-Face Version...

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¶5. (SBU) Tymoshenko Bloc (BYuT) MP Hryhoriy Nemyrya told Charge that the Orange forces punted because they needed more time to finish the coalition agreement. According to him, there had been significant progress during marathon talks during the night of June 6. The three sides had agreed on policies, tasks for the new Cabinet of Ministers during the coming months, and coalition rules; there was, however, no agreement on who should serve as Rada Speaker. The sides were nearing agreement on Socialist Party (SP) chief Oleksandr Moroz, but the deal was not yet sealed, according to Nemyrya.

¶6. (C) This "we're almost there" view was seconded by Presidential chief of staff Oleh Rybachuk, who told Charge on the afternoon of June 6 that OU's point man in the coalition talks, Roman Bezsmertny, needed "one more day" to shore up OU support for Moroz as Speaker and wrap up the negotiations. Rybachuk, who said he would go to Crimea on June 8, asserted that a deal could be announced as early as June 8; an extraordinary Rada session would be called (he did not say when) and legislative approval for Sea Breeze would be sought.

...The Bezsmertny Camp Version...

¶7. (SBU) Roman Bezsmertny's longtime aide, Svitlana Gumenyuk, gave us a different version of why Team Orange punted. She related that at the June 6 talks Moroz had given Yushchenko an ultimatum: make me Rada Speaker or there will be no new Orange coalition. Gumenyuk told us that Yushchenko had pushed back, noting that OU came in second (among the Orange forces) in the March elections, and rightfully deserved the Speaker's post. Gumenyuk claimed that Regions was now engaged in a proverbial full-court press to get Moroz to defect and join in a Regions/Communists/SP alliance. She added that there was now consensus within OU that Bezsmertny, and not Petro Poroshenko, should be the next Rada Speaker. (Note: In a June 5 meeting reported Ref B, Bezsmertny told us that Regions had not offered the Speakership to Moroz.)

¶8. (C) BYuT MP and former journalist Andriy Shevchenko, number five on the BYuT list, described today's Rada session as an "embarrassment" for Team Orange. The Ukrainian people, he told us, were losing patience with the prolonged bickering and haggling between BYuT, OU and the SPU. Echoing what Gumenyuk told us, Shevchenko claimed that Moroz "had smelled the blood in the water" during the June 6 late-night talks; he was not going to give in easily, and was "listening" to Regions. The "action," he said, was now between OU and Moroz; BYuT was "on the sideline" watching its partners "slug it out." Shevchenko predicted that Moroz would back down and Bezsmertny would emerge as the Team Orange choice to be Rada Speaker; OU insider Petro Poroshenko, whom Shevchenko said he respected and worked well with at Fifth Channel, "did not have the votes" to become Speaker.

¶9. (C) Citing unspecified "friends within OU," Shevchenko added that the Party of Regions had "committed suicide" by stoking anti-NATO protests in Crimea. Shevchenko related that President Yushchenko had been "outraged," in particular, by Yanukovych's low-key reaction to the Sea Breeze protests; instead of helping calm things down, Shevchenko said, Yanukovych had blasted Yushchenko "for being incompetent." Any prospect of an Orange-Blue coalition was now dead, Shevchenko emphasized.

Comment: Missing Man

¶10. (C) What happens next is unclear. If Regions and the Communists get 150 MP signatures, they can ask the Rada's five-member Provisional Presidium to hold an extraordinary Rada session. How that presidium makes a decision is hazy, with some legal analysts saying that all five members have to agree 1) to hold the special session and 2) when to hold it; with three Orange members and two Blue, such unity seems unlikely. Amidst the smoke and noise, at least one thing is clear: Yushchenko is not fully engaged; he remains on a visit to the Netherlands. In the meantime, the maneuvering and negotiations will continue.

Gwaltney